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ABSTRACT

This report by the Texas State Board of Education to the 70th Legislature outlines reform legislation established in response to the call for school reform, specifically examining the components and implementation of a well-balanced basic curriculum in public schools. A reproduction of Section 21.101 of the Texas Education Code is supplied, outlining the required curriculum to be offered in each school district. Part 1, offering a historical introduction, addresses these topics: (1) status of the curriculum in the past, (2) legislative reports and responses, (3) implementation plans and strategies, (4) establishment of a well-balanced curriculum, and (5) verification of implementation. The second part examines the alignment of the education system with the new curriculum, exploring these areas: (1) changes in graduation requirements, (2) the textbook adoption process, (3) student assessment, (4) teacher preparation in the essential elements, and (5) development of curriculum materials. Part 3 looks at the ongoing examination of the new curriculum, citing strengths and concerns. No recommendations for change are made in this report. (WTH)

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The Status of Curriculum in the Public Schools



January 1987

EA 019 367

The Status of Curriculum in the Public Schools

**As reported by the
State Board of Education**

**Submitted to the Governor, Lt. Governor,
and
the Seventieth Legislature**

Texas Education Code [21.101(f)]

1984—1986

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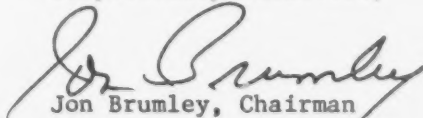
To the Honorable Governor of Texas, Lt. Governor,
and Seventieth Legislature,

The systematic structure for establishing and implementing a statewide core curriculum, developed by House Bill 246 of the Sixty-Seventh Legislature and now written into the revised Section 21.101 of the Texas Education Code, is fully in place. Final adoption by the State Board of Education of the curriculum rules came in March 1984. Those rules are found in Title 19, Chapter 75 of the Texas Administrative Code.

Representing the culmination of several years of a broad-based, widely publicized effort to reach consensus regarding what is essential, the established curriculum provides for the sequential development of the basic skills and concepts needed by Texas graduates as they prepare for productive and responsible lives in the 20th century. Partial implementation of the new curriculum began in the 1984-85 school year; full implementation began in the 1985-86 school year. Annually, groups of educators meet to assess statewide implementation efforts and to articulate suggestions that may eventually form the basis for further improvement in the curriculum.

The State Board of Education is pleased to update the Legislature on the many implications of the reform legislation. Pursuant to the provisions of Section 21.101(f), Texas Education Code, the attached material constitutes the Board's report on the status of the curriculum in the public schools. The Central Education Agency is available to provide you with further information should it be desired.

Respectfully submitted,


Jon Brumley, Chairman
State Board of Education

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Texas Education Code

§21.101. Required Curriculum

- (a) Each school district that offers prekindergarten through grade 12 shall offer a well-balanced curriculum that includes:
 - (1) English language arts;
 - (2) other languages, to the extent possible;
 - (3) mathematics;
 - (4) science;
 - (5) health;
 - (6) physical education;
 - (7) fine arts;
 - (8) social studies;
 - (9) economics, with emphasis on the free enterprise system and its benefits;
 - (10) business education;
 - (11) vocational education; and
 - (12) Texas and United States history as individual subjects and in reading courses.
- (b) The State Board of Education by rule shall designate subjects comprising a well-balanced curriculum to be offered by a school district that does not offer prekindergarten through grade 12.
- (c) The State Board of Education by rule shall designate the essential elements of each subject listed in Subsection (a) of this section and shall require each district to provide instruction in those elements at appropriate grade levels. In order to be accredited, a district must provide instruction in those essential elements as specified by the state board.
- (d) Local instructional plans may draw upon state curriculum frameworks and program standards as appropriate. The responsibility for enabling all children to participate actively in a balanced curriculum which is designed to meet individual needs rests with the local school district. Districts are encouraged to exceed minimum requirements of the law. A primary purpose of the public school curriculum in Texas shall be to prepare thoughtful, active citizens who understand the importance of patriotism and can function productively in a free enterprise society with appreciation for the basic democratic values of our state and national heritage.
- (e) The State Board of Education shall provide for optional subjects in addition to those provided by Subsection (a) of this section as appropriate for districts that require choices in order to address unique local needs. In addition, the commissioner of education may permit a school district to vary from the required curriculum as necessary to avoid hardship to the district.

- (f) Not later than the 30th day preceding the day on which each regular session of the legislature convenes, the State Board of Education shall transmit to the governor, the lieutenant governor, and the legislature a report on the status of curriculum in the public schools. The report shall include recommendations for legislative changes necessary to improve, modify, or add to the curriculum.
- (g) The State Board of Education and local school districts shall foster the continuation of the tradition of teaching American and Texas history and the free enterprise system in regular subject matter and in reading courses in the public free schools of Texas and in the adoption of textbooks.

[Acts 1969, 61st Leg., p. 2919, ch. 889, §1, eff. Sept. 1, 1969. Amended by Acts 1981, 67th Leg., p. 727, ch. 274, §1, eff. Aug. 31, 1981; Acts 1984, 68th Leg., 2nd C.S., p. 396, ch. 28, art. IV, part B, §2, eff. June 1, 1985.]

Section 3 of the 1981 amendatory act provides:

"The State Board of Education shall implement the requirements of Section 21.101, Texas Education Code, as amended by this Act, in a timely and appropriate manner. To the extent possible, the board shall begin implementation for the 1981-1982 school year. The board may require compliance with the requirements of laws repealed by this Act [§§21.102 to 21.108 and 21.112 and 21.12], not including Sections 4.15 and 4.16, Texas Education Code, until the board fully implements Section 21.101."

Contents

Historical Introduction	1
Status of the curriculum in the past	1
Legislative reports and responses	1
Implementation plans and strategies	2
Establishment of a well-balanced curriculum	4
Verification of implementation	4
Alignment of the Education System with the New Curriculum	5
Changes in graduation requirements	5
Textbook adoption process	6
Student assessment	7
Teacher preparation in the essential elements	7
Development of curriculum materials	8
Ongoing Examination of the Status of the Curriculum	9
Recommendations	12

Historical Introduction

Status of the Curriculum in the Past

Sparked by an increasing awareness of poor performance in public schools nationwide, the people of Texas had long voiced their dissatisfaction about the status of education, particularly the curriculum, in their state. In response to public demand, the 66th Legislature passed House Concurrent Resolution 90 resolving to study the composition of a well-balanced and basic curriculum and to recommend appropriate legislation to the 67th Legislature for implementing school reform. Public hearings called for:

- state leadership in establishing a basic curriculum that all students would have an opportunity to learn
- a rigorous school program, one which would challenge students with high expectations and consistent discipline
- graduation requirements based on the demonstration of mastery of basic life skills such as literacy, computing, and communication
- a comprehensive and sequential program of study in the arts
- appropriate activities to support students' physical and social development

Legislative Reports and Responses

Two distinguished groups considered the definition of curriculum and reported their findings and recommendations to Governor William Clements, Jr. Appointed for this purpose, the Governor's Advisory Committee on Education made its report in June; the State Board of Education made its report in November of 1980.

In these separately published reports, both the Governor's Advisory Committee on Education and the State Board of Education called for:

- repeal of all former laws relating to curriculum to be taught
- establishment by the State Board of Education of a state basic curriculum

These recommendations, along with the findings of numerous public hearings, culminated in a plan that revised, delineated, and prioritized the Texas public school curriculum. When it next convened, the 67th Texas Legislature mandated this plan, which was enacted as House Bill 246 and is often called the "curriculum reform" bill. Codified into law in Section 21.101 of the Texas Education Code, the rules and procedures for implementing the state basic curriculum are contained in Title 19, Chapter 75 of the Texas Administrative Code, commonly referred to as "Chapter 75."

Implementation Plans and Strategies

An implementation plan for HB 246 was devised which gave policymakers and educators the opportunity to work together in the development of the new curriculum which would be offered by every school district in the state. At the September 1981 State Board of Education meeting, a planning committee of 12 Board members was established to develop and adopt procedures and time schedules for implementing the new curriculum revision law.

The implementation plan, adopted by the State Board, provided for professional educators in the field to make initial recommendations. The plan also established special advisory committees of professional educators and local board of trustee members and provided for statewide public input. A steering committee consisting of three State Board members was appointed by the Board chairman to oversee the accomplishment of the plan. This Committee met on several occasions between October 1981 and May 1982 to review proposed drafts of HB 246 materials and timelines for implementation.

Geographic Representation

A major strategy to garner input from professional educators divided the state into four geographical zones, each comprised of five education service centers as follows:

<u>Zone I</u>	<u>Zone II</u>	<u>Zone III</u>	<u>Zone IV</u>
Edinburg	Amarillo	Wichita Falls	Houston
Corpus Christi	San Angelo	Richardson	Beaumont
Victoria	Lubbock	Fort Worth	Huntsville
Austin	Midland	Waco	Kilgore
San Antonio	El Paso	Abilene	Mount Pleasant

Curriculum Areas

Then the 12 subject areas which by law comprise the well-balanced curriculum were combined into clusters:

- Cluster A: English language arts, mathematics, fine arts, and other languages
- Cluster B: vocational education, science, health, and physical education
- Cluster C: social studies, economics, business education, and Texas and United States history

Committee Participants

Organization of the 12 subject areas into clusters facilitated the work of a regional committee appointed by the Commissioner of Education. From the numerous meetings of this "Noah's Ark" of educators, working in what became known as "cluster groups," emerged a consensus that educators would have to identify:

- what knowledge and skills constitute the essential elements

- grade level and sequencing of essential elements
- the relationship of essential elements to course offerings
- graduation requirements, including required and elective courses
- other pertinent matters

Education service center staff members collected names of nominees for the work committees from superintendents in their regions. Professional curriculum organizations with the sole purpose of improving one of the subjects identified in the law were also requested to nominate persons. The list of nominees provided a cross section of individuals that included:

- small, medium, and large enrollment districts
- rural, suburban, and urban districts
- elementary and secondary, including middle or junior high school, personnel
- teachers, supervisors, principals, central office administrators, and leaders in higher education
- men and women
- representatives from the various ethnic groups

Work Sessions

The Commissioner of Education appointed participants from the nominations received, and two-day regional work sessions for each subject area were held in each of the geographical zones. Each geographical zone was represented by 25-32 practitioners with each education service center region represented by four to eight individuals in each subject area cluster. Three hundred and eighty professional educators from over 200 school districts and institutions of higher education were involved in the 12 work sessions between January and August of 1982.

Following the meetings of each cluster, the chairpersons of the four zones met in Austin to consolidate their reports. They determined where consensus recommendations were evident and negotiated areas of discrepancy to best represent the thinking of the majority. The results were single reports for each of the cluster subjects.

A committee, consisting of the 12 chairpersons of the cluster work sessions, was then formed to assist in combining the products from the 12 meetings and to refine recommendations on broad curriculum issues such as graduation requirements and to describe strategies that would provide transition to the new curriculum structure.

Dissemination Efforts

By March 1983, the State Board of Education was able to distribute for discussion a series of documents containing proposed essential elements for all the content areas, kindergarten through Grade 12. Orientation workshops were held for thorough discussion of these draft materials in each of the 20 regional education

service centers. Approximately 3,500 representatives from 791 school districts, as well as some 425 individuals representing 134 professional and special interest groups, debated the document.

Twenty public hearings solicited further testimony which the Central Education Agency collected and organized for committee review. Two State Board Advisory Committees—one for Public School Professional Personnel and the other for Public School Boards of Trustees—reviewed this public testimony, gathered monthly from September 1983 to January 1984, along with the recommendations made by the cluster groups.

Establishment of a Well-balanced Curriculum

Final adoption by the State Board of Education of the subsequent curriculum rules which these numerous diverse groups had studied and debated for nearly four years came in March 1984. Partial implementation of the new curriculum as well as time allotments for each subject were initiated in 1984-85, with full implementation of the law required in the elementary grades by the 1985-86 school year.

The rules were amended to include essential elements for computer science in September 1984, for prekindergarten in March 1985, and for driver's education in July 1985. In September 1984, ROTC courses were also approved for state credit.

Verification of Implementation

Immediately the Central Education Agency requested implementation plans from the approximately 1100 school districts in the state which were asked to submit:

- verification that the elementary time allotments and essential elements as described by State Board rule would be implemented; and, if this were not possible, what preparations were being made for full implementation by the School Year 1985-86
- verification of implementation of the essential elements as described by State Board rule for Grades 7-12, and, if this were not possible, what preparations were being made for full implementation by the School Year 1985-86

Staff in the Division of Curriculum Development at the Central Education Agency examined all of the implementation plans, negotiated any discrepancies, and filed the plans with the Division of School Accreditation after review. The accreditation monitoring teams then referred to the implementation plans when they visited the districts. Submitted implementation plans included signed verification that the school district board of trustees would develop such policies as were mandated by Chapter 75 of the Texas Administrative Code regarding direction and evaluation of instructional programs.

Administrators also verified that the major provisions of Chapter 75 would be communicated to parents, teachers, students, and the general public. Documentation of such communications was contained in district files for review by the Division of School Accreditation. Extensive staff development and public relations work by the Central Education Agency, by the regional education service centers, and by school districts facilitated timely implementation of House Bill 246.

Alignment of the Education System With the New Curriculum

In the years described above and into the present, Texas is witnessing massive, thoroughgoing, and unprecedented curriculum reform. Accordingly, other pertinent components of the education process have to be aligned with the new curriculum to support it, improve the quality of instruction, and measure the success of the reform effort. Other aspects of the education system that were influenced by the development of the new curriculum included:

- changes in graduation requirements
- incorporation of the essential elements into textbooks used by the public schools
- coordination of the statewide testing programs (TABS and TEAMS) and district-developed assessment instruments with the essential elements of the new curriculum to ensure that testing occurs over material taught
- teacher preparation in the essential elements
- development of curriculum materials, frameworks, and guides at the state and local levels

Changes in Graduation Requirements

State requirements for graduation increased in 1984 from 18 to 21 units of credit. Students entering Grade 9 in the 1984-85 school year and thereafter must meet the increased state requirements as described by Title 19, Chapter 75 of the Texas Administrative Code (Subchapter F). The advanced high school program, based on legislation passed in 1983 and described in Chapter 75.152, was also added and required 22 units of credit. Course requirements for each program are listed in the chart that follows.

Upon completion of the mandatory number of credits and a satisfactory score on the exit level test as per requirements added by House Bill 72 in 1985, a student is eligible to graduate with a diploma. All graduates receive the same type of diploma.

The academic achievement record (transcript), and not the diploma, records courses completed and grades as well as individual accomplishments. Students graduating in the 1986-87 school year will be the last class allowed to be graduated with only 18 units of credit and a satisfactory score on the exit level test; students thereafter must meet the increased unit requirements to graduate.

Requirements in the Content Areas

Course	Number of credits required for:	
	Graduation	Advanced Program*
English Language Arts	4	4
Mathematics	3	3
Science	2	3
Social Studies U.S./Texas History	2½	2½
Economics/Free Enterprise	½	½
Health	½	½
Physical Education	1½	1½
Other Languages		2
Computer Science		1
Fine Arts		1
Electives	7	3
Total Credits Required:	21	22

Textbook Adoption Process

Following the adoption of the state curriculum, essential elements for specific subjects and grade levels have been included in the call for new textbooks since 1984. However, the State Board of Education is concerned that some new courses are being implemented without textbooks and some textbooks without the required essential elements remain in use in the schools. As the six-year textbook cycle is implemented, essential elements are required to be included in the books that are adopted—a process that requires six years to implement fully. House Bill 72 mandated that the state move from an eight-year to a six-year cycle. By 1990, most textbooks will include the essential elements if the currently approved cycle remains unchanged.

Student Assessment

In May 1979, the Texas Legislature mandated that minimum basic skills testing be instituted in the state, and a program of testing known as the Texas Assessment of Basic Skills (TABS) was developed. Beginning with the 1979-80 school year, the Central Education Agency adopted and administered appropriate criterion-referenced tests designed to measure minimum basic skills in reading, writing, and mathematics for all pupils at the fifth-grade and ninth-grade levels. Testing at the third-grade level began with the 1980-81 school year.

In July 1984, the Second Called Session of the 68th Texas Legislature mandated further testing as part of House Bill 72. Beginning with the 1985-86 school year, the Texas Educational Assessment of Minimum Skills (TEAMS), formerly TABS, has been administered to assess basic skills in mathematics, reading, and writing in Grades 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, and at the exit level.

All TEAMS tests are correlated to the essential elements of the state curriculum and show how much of the material taught has been mastered. Because this type of test measures performance on each objective separately, TEAMS scores are particularly useful for instructional planning, pointing administrators and teachers to areas where individual students need remediation or where delivery of the curriculum may be inadequate.

By Summer 1986, preliminary results of the first TEAMS testing for Grades 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, and 11 were reported, providing benchmarks for educators at the initiation of the new curriculum. Review and field testing of TEAMS items is an ongoing activity of both state-level policymakers and selected educators in the field.

Teacher Preparation in the Essential Elements

In 1981, the Texas Legislature passed Senate Bill 50 which required that persons seeking educator certification in Texas perform satisfactorily on comprehensive examinations. The State Board of Education mandated the development of a testing program as part of the state's educator certification requirements. These examinations became known as the ExCET tests (*Examination for the Certification of Educators in Texas*). Their purpose is to ensure that educators have full knowledge of the content of the subject areas for which certification is desired.

Test objectives were developed based on the current Texas state-mandated curriculum. After February 1, 1986, all persons who completed teacher training programs who were candidates for initial Texas certification had to pass the tests which included:

- a professional development test at the appropriate level (elementary, secondary, or all-level)
- a content specialization test in each area for which certification was sought

Development of Curriculum Materials

The Central Education Agency is providing curriculum frameworks which give guidance and direction to curriculum writers at the district level. State frameworks in the curriculum areas of mathematics, social studies, science, and English language arts have been disseminated to school districts or are in the process of being developed.

Further technical assistance has been provided by a series of documents entitled REACH (Real Education Achievement Can Happen), published by the Central Education Agency to provide support to local districts in the area of school improvement. REACH documents, which guide the school staffs through self-analysis and inservice on the characteristics of an effective school, will be an ongoing response to the needs of individual campuses seeking to increase student achievement.

Ongoing Examination of the Status of the Curriculum

Chapter 75.5 of the Texas Administrative Code requires that during the School Year 1990-91 and every five years thereafter, the State Board review and evaluate the appropriateness of the identified essential elements and other provisions of Chapter 75. Based upon the results of the five-year assessments, the State Board may modify the rules. As part of this process, an annual review of curriculum and related issues is conducted to secure evaluative information regarding the continued appropriateness of the essential elements and their grade-level designations.

The Central Education Agency began in Spring 1986 to collect such information to present to the State Board of Education. Cluster meetings were held in each of the regional education service centers for all the curriculum subject areas. Participants included superintendents, principals, curriculum supervisors, teachers, college/university educators, and professional organization personnel who participated in the original cluster meetings in 1981-83.

This group of 300 educators met in Austin in April 1986 to summarize their review. From their comments emerged consensus on areas of strength in the new curriculum as well as areas of concern.

Strengths of the New Curriculum

Field review participants expressed appreciation for the following strengths:

- construction of educationally sound goals for students of medial, remedial, and advanced achievement
- a sense of assurance gained from the knowledge that advancement from one grade to another, or graduation, ensures possession of a set of mastered skills which are consistent throughout the state. Other benefits of a statewide curriculum include:
 - consistent definition of curriculum
 - articulation of continuity across grade levels
 - communication of needs to textbook publishers
 - facilitation of curriculum document development
- teacher enthusiasm garnered from the ability to plan ahead to maximize instructional quality
- confirmation of the importance of subject areas through the process of mandated essential elements for each discipline

- statewide consistency of curriculum benefiting both students who move from district to district and the administrators who have to place these students appropriately in new classes

The consistent opinion of the cluster participants was that the new curriculum had, even in its first year of implementation, established a stronger, more effective statewide education system for the school children of Texas. Participants' praise for the new curriculum was summed up well by one teacher who said, "It's a bright new day for us; we have something solid here."

Concerns about the Curriculum

Concerns about the curriculum fell into four basic categories: content and implementation, teacher issues, mastery issues, and issues regarding instructional arrangements.

Content and Implementation

Content and implementation concerns included such items as identifying the appropriate sequence of the essential elements for each grade in the elementary program; prioritizing and finetuning the essential elements to establish a core of concepts which will not be duplicated across disciplines, and keeping the essential elements current. Other concerns relating to content and implementation were raised; however, the passage of time may alleviate some implementation anxiety.

Teacher Concerns

Cluster participants expressed concern about the preparation of the teachers who are required to teach the new curriculum and called for more rigorous preparation programs, more inclusive preservice training, and more thorough staff development.

Mastery Concerns

Concerns in this area included the paperwork caused by the need to document essential elements taught as well as those mastered. This concern has been since addressed by House Bill 50 of the Second Called Session of the 69th Legislature. The effort to determine and document mastery caused teachers to overtest—too often by paper and pencil tests—and to ignore higher level thinking skills.

Concerns Regarding Instructional Arrangement

Educators reported inadequate facilities, equipment, and materials needed to implement the new curriculum. Teachers especially are aware that, without adequate funding for the minimum equipment and facilities needed, the success of the new curriculum is jeopardized.

Educators from all special program areas shared concerns about appropriate modification of the curriculum for their particular population. Bilingual/migrant/English as a second language-ESL, special education, and educators of the gifted and talented comprise the special program areas.

The State Board of Education has made a substantial effort to provide students and teachers with appropriate textbooks and instructional materials to teach the essential elements required by Chapter 75 of the Texas Administrative Code. Because of existing contracts when Chapter 75 was implemented, however, all textbooks that include the essential elements will not be in place until 1990 provided that the currently approved six-year textbook cycle remains in place. There are still many subjects and courses for which textbooks or new textbooks containing the essential elements have not been provided.

Recommendations

As educators monitor the implementation of the new curriculum and a consensus emerges that certain changes are needed, the State Board of Education will adjust Chapter 75 of the Texas Administrative Code accordingly or submit recommendations to the Legislature.

No recommendations for change in the curriculum in the public schools are included in this report to the 70th Legislature.

Texas Education Agency
Austin, Texas
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January 1987

